

Message Text

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ACTION SCI-06

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ADP-00 NSF-04 DODE-00 PM-07 L-03

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 RSR-01 SS-15 NSC-10

PRS-01 CG-00 IO-13 COA-02 ACDA-19 COME-00 INT-08 /117 W

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P 081635Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3172

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 5843

JOINT EMBASSY/DAO/MILGP MESSAGE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TGEN, AR, US, MARR, XV

SUBJECT: ANTARCTICA - AGREEMENT ON ALUMINUM MATTING FOR MARAMBIO
AIRFIELD

REFS: A. STATE 147985, B. BA 4945

1. SUMMARY. ARGENTINE AIR FORCE CONTINUES REGARD AGENCY-TO-
AGENCY ARRANGEMENT, UNDER BILATERAL SCIENCE AGREEMENT, AS ONLY
ACCEPTABLE ROUTE TO MARAMBIO COOPERATION. VIEWPOINT BASED ON
PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF NEGOTIATING NEW AGREEMENT, INCLUDING
NEED FOR ARGENTINE CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW, AND AAF DESIRE TO OBTAIN
MAXIMUM PRESTIGE FROM ITS ANTARCTIC ACTIVITIES, EMBASSY BELIEVES
US INTERESTS CAN BE SATISFACOTRILY PROTECTED UNDER AGENCY LEVEL
AGREEMENT PROVIDED WE OBTAIN SATISFACOTRY ASSURANCES FROM GOA OF
AAF COMPETENCE TO ENTER INTO AGREEMENT. VISIT OF PROVISIONAL
PRESIDENT LASTIRI TO MARAMBIO THIS WEEK END MAY SERVE TO INTENSIFY
GOA AND AAF INTEREST TO GET ON WITH PROJECT. ACTION REQUESTED:
EARLY DECISION AND ADVICE TO EMBASSY ON TYPE OF AGREEMENT WE
PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY SCICOUN AND ASSISTANT AIR ATTACHE MET WITH ARGENTINE
AIR FORCE (AAF) DIRECTOR OF ANTARCTIC OFFICE, COMMODORE JUAN GARCIA
TO SEEK CLARIFICATION OF AAF PREFERENCE FOR AGENCY-TO-AGENCY
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AGREEMENT AS AUTHORIZED BY REF A. GARCIA CONFIRMED AAF VIEW THAT

MARAMBIO COOPERATION CAN PROCEED ONLY THROUGH AGENCY-TO-AGENCY ARRANGEMENT UNDER BILATERAL SCIENCE AGREEMENT, ASKING RHETORICALLY WHY US APPARENTLY SO CONCERNED BY THIS POINT AFTER OPERATING FOR NUMBER OF YEARS AT MENDOZA AIR BASE WITH NOTHING MORE THAN VERBAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN COMMANDERS. AAF INSISTENCE ON AGENCY-TO-AGENCY ARRANGEMENT FOR MARAMBIO BASED FUNDAMENTALLY ON TWO REASONS:

A. AT OPERATING LEVEL, AAF NOT ONLY CONSIDERS MARAMBIO BASE ITS EXCLUSIVE CONCERN, BUT GENERALLY CONSIDERS ITSELF LEADER AMONG OTHER SERVICES AND ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNED WITH ANTARCTIC ACTIVITIES. IT, THEREFORE, UNWILLING TO SHARE "ACTION" WITH ANY OTHER OPERATING AGENCY. THESE INCLUDE ARGENTINE NAVY, NATIONAL ANTARCTIC DIRECTORATE (A MINISTRY OF DEFENSE ORGANIZATION WITH COORDINATING RESPONSIBILITY FOR ARGENTINE ANTARCTIC PROGRAMS, AND ARGENTINE ANTARCTIC INSTITUTE (A SEMI-AUTONOMOUS RESEARCH GROUP, TRADITIONALLY NAVY-ORIENTED, UNDER NATIONAL ANTARCTIC DIRECTORATE). GARCIA DISMISSED FACT THAT DIRECTORATE NOW UNDER COMMAND OF RETIRED AAF BRIGADIER RUIZ AS OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE, SINCE POST IS ROTATING ONE AND WILL BE FILLED BY OTHER SERVICES IN DUE COURSE.

B. MORE IMPORTANTLY, AAF CONSIDERS THAT IT HAS CLEAR LEGAL AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO MARAMBIO COOPERATION ARRANGEMENT UNDER BILATERAL SCIENCE AGREEMENT, BUT LACKS AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO NEW AGREEMENT, EITHER ON OWN BEHALF OR BEHALF OF GOVERNMENT. SEPARATE, NEW AGREEMENT, WHETHER AT AGENCY LEVEL OR GOVERNMENTAL LEVEL WOULD INVOLVE COMPLICATED PROCEDURES INCLUDING ARGENTINE CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW, WITH CONSEQUENT UNCERTAINTIES AND DELAYS UNACCEPTABLE TO AAF.

3. AS INDICATED IN REF B, EMBREPS STRESSED THAT REGARDLESS OF FORM WHICH MARAMBIO AGREEMENT MIGHT TAKE, FROM US POINT OF VIEW IT COULD BE NEGOTIATED ONLY WITH KNOWLEDGE AND CONSENT OF GOA, WHICH, IN ACCORDANCE WITH NORMAL PRACTICES BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS, WOULD COME FROM FOREIGN MINISTRY. GARCIA EXPRESSED AGREEMENT WITH THIS PRINCIPLE

, AND STATED CATEGORICALLY THAT AAF HAS KEPT FONMIN INFORMED OF ITS MARAMBIO DISCUSSIONS WITH US REPS. HE EVIDENCED STRONG INTEREST IN SEEKING WAY TO PROVIDE ASSURANCES TO USG THAT AAF AUTHORIZED TO ENTER INTO MARAMBIO ARRANGEMENT, BUT NEVERTHELESS EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT AAF COMMANDER IN CHIEF WOULD BE PREPARED TO HAVE HIS AUTHORITY (WHICH CONFIDENTIAL

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GARCIA SEEMS TO REGARD AS OBVIOUS) CONFIRMED BY SOME OTHER MINISTER OF

GOVERNMENT. EMBREPS POINTED OUT THAT NO GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE TO RELY UPON ITS OWN JUDGEMENT AS TO AUTHORITY OF VARIOUS AGENCIES OF ANOTHER GOVERNMENT, AND THAT AAF WAS JUST AS ENTITLED TO BE ASSURED OF NSF AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO AGREEMENT AS WAS USG TO KNOW OF ITS AUTHORITY. IT WAS ALSO POINTED OUT THAT UNDER BILATERAL SCIENCE AGREEMENT, ARGENTINE FONMIN IS ARGENTINE EXECUTIVE AGENCY,

AND MUST THEREFORE TAKE COGNIZANCE OF AGENCY-TO-AGENCY ARRANGEMENTS
IN ANY CASE.

4. GARCIA ALSO TOOK OCCASION TO REITERATE FREQUENT AAF LINE
THAT MARAMBIO IMPROVEMENTS WILL GO FORWARD WITH OR WITHOUT US
COOPERATION AND THAT FEASIBILITY OF ENTERING INTO COOPERATIVE
ARRANGEMENT TO GOA IS THEREFORE CONTINUALLY DIMINISHING. THIS
SEASON, FOR EXAMPLE, AAF EXPECTS TO CONSTRUCT SCIENTIFIC PAVILLION,
HELICOPTER HANGER, WEATHER BALLON PREPARATION SHED, AND INSTALL
SATELLITE WEATHER PICTURE RECEIVER.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 5843

5. EMBASSY COMMENT. WHILE AAF DESIRE TO KEEP ALL OTHER ANTARCTIC
OPERATING AGENCIES AS FAR AWAY FROM MARAMBIO ARRANGEMENT AS
AS POSSIBLE IS TYPICAL OF LACK OF CORRDIATION AND COOPERATION AMONG
GOA GROUP, THIS IS FUNDAMENTALLY MATTER FOR ARGENTINES TO DECIDE.
REGARDLESS OF FORM AGREEMENT MIGHT TAKE, WORKING LEVEL PARTNER WILL
OBVIOUSLY HAVE TO BE AAF, AND EMBASSY SEES ADVANTAGES FOR US IN
HAVING CLEAR-CUT RESPONSIBILITY OF AAF GIVEN MAXIMUM EMPHASIS
THROUGH USE OF AGENCY-TO-AGENCY ARRANGEMENT.

6. AAF CONTENTION THAT ITS AUTHORITY TO MAKE ARRANGEMENT SHOULD NOT
BE QUESTIONED, AND THAT NEW GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT,
THEREFORE, NOT APPROPRIATE OR NECESSARY, IS OF MORE CONCERN, AND
NOT ENTIRELY UNDERSTANDABLE IN LIGHT GARCIA ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT GOA,
THROUGH FONMIN, WOULD CLEARLY HAVE TO APPROVE ARRANGEMENT. MOST
CONCRETE OBJECTION PUT FORWARD BY GARCIA TO NEW AGREEMENT ROUTE WAS
NEED FOR CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW. WE BELIEVE THIS IS LEGITIMATE POINT,

AND IS IMPORTANT PART OF BASIS OF AAF INSISTENCE ON AGENCY-TO-AGENCY ARRANGEMENT. AS DEPT WILL RECALL, HOWEVER, THIS VIEWPOINT IS NOT NEW, HAVING EMERGED AT EARLY DATE IN MARAMBIO DISCUSSIONS, ALTHOUGH PERHAPS INTENSIFIED SINCE ELECTION AND INSTALLATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT.

ON BALANCE, THEREFORE, EMBASSY NOT INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT AAF POSITION DERIVES FROM NEWFOUND DESIRE TO SHOR UP POSITION; RATHER, IT BASED PRINCIPALLY ON MYSTIQUE OF SERVICE PRESTIGE AND AUTONOMY, COUPLED WITH HONEST CONCERN OVER PROCEDURAL CONSEQUENCES OF NEGOTIATING NEW AGREEMENT AT GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT LEVEL. IN CONFIDENTIAL

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RESPONSE QUESTION IN REF A, WE TEND TO SHARE CONCERN THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH FONMIN AND APPROVAL BY CONGRESS COULD BE CONSIDERABLY MORE DIFFICULT. WHILE THIS NEGOTIATION WILL NOT BE SIMPLE ONE IN ANY CASE, OUR EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH

ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES ARE GENERALLY STRAIGHTFORWARD AND EXPEDITIOUS, ONCE THEY DECIDE THAT THEY INTERESTED IN AFFIRMATIVE RESULT.

7. AN ASST AIR ATTACHE ADVISED EARLIER, BA PRESS OF AUG 7 ANNOUNCEMENT THAT PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT LASTIRI, ACCOMPANIED BY MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, WILL FLY TO MARAMBIO THIS WEEKEND IN CELEBRATION OF AIR FORCE DAY, AND WILL EXERCISE EXECUTIVE POWER FROM BASE ON THAT OCCASION. DECREE ANNOUNCING VISIT HIGHLY COMPLIMENTARY TO SERVICES AND ESPECIALLY AIR FORCE ROLE IN ANTARCTICA, REAFFIRMING ARGENTINE SOVEREIGNTY OVER ITS SECTOR OF ANTARCTICA. THIS OPERATION, THE SAFETY OF WHICH WE CONSIDER TO BE SOMEWHAT DUBIOUS, IS ANOTHER CLEAR INDICATION OF AIR FORCE MYSTIQUE CONCERNING ITS ROLE AT MARAMBIO. IT ALSO SERVES AS VISIBLE EVIDENCE THAT AAF, WHILE ANXIOUS TO STRESS IT ASCENDANCY IN CONNECTION WITH MARAMBIO, IS NOT ACTING INDEPENDENTLY OR WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE OF EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF GOVT. IT ALSO CAN HARDLY BE DOUBTED THAT IMPROVEMENT OF MARMAMBIO AND POSSIBLE US COOPERATION WILL BE MATTER OF DISCUSSION DURING THIS VISIT. IT IS OF COURSE, TRUISM THAT MILITARY NO LONGER ENJOYS STATUS IT HELD UNDER JUNTA GOVERNMENT, BUT DEPARTMENTS OBSERVATION IN REF A THAT THIS IS "REGIME WHICH TENDS TO DISCREDIT MILITARY" IS, IN OUR VIEW, CONSIDERABLY OVERSTATED AND INCREASINGLY LESS APPLICABLE.

8. EMBASSY CONCLUSION IS THAT AAF INSISTENCE ON AGENCY-TO-AGENCY AGREEMENT, MYSTICAL AS IT MAY BE, IS LIKELY TO PREVAIL, AND THAT

AGREEMENT ON OTHER BASIS WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE EASILY ACHIEVABLE. ACCORDINGLY, IF MARAMBIO COOPERATION IS IN OUR INTERESTS, AS WE BELIEVE IT TO BE, AND IF OTHER WAYS CAN BE FOUND TO SAFEGUARD US INTERESTS, WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD ACCOMMODATE AAF VIEWPOINT. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT ACCEPTABLE FORMULATION WOULD BE NEGOTIATION OF AGENCY LEVEL AGREEMENT PURSUANT TO AN EXCHANGE OF NOTES WITH FONMIN IN WHICH AAF AND NSF ARE, RESPECTIVELY, IDENTIFIED AS AGENCIES

COMPETENT TO ENTER INTO AGREEMENT AND FULFILL ITS OBLIGATIONS. WE
BELIEVE EVEN THIS FORMULATION WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR AAF TO SWALLOW,
BUT THAT IT WORTH A TRY.
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